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COORDINATION OF THE POLICIES AND ACTIVITIES OF THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND OTHER BODIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM RELATED TO THE FOLLOWING THEME: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT

Draft agreed conclusions submitted by the Vice-President of the Council, Mr. Mihai Horia C. Botez (Romania)

The Economic and Social Council took note of the report of the Secretary-General on the division of labour and coordination within the United Nations system in the field of science and technology (E/1994/70) and agreed that:

1. Science and technology are critical to national development and human welfare and must help to ensure sustainability while fostering the development, efficient use and safety of productive systems. The wide and equitable distribution of scientific and technological know-how and capacity at the national and international levels is essential for the achievement of sustainable development. At the same time, the existence of a well-functioning science and technology infrastructure is a key indicator of development.

2. The Vienna Programme of Action on Science and Technology for Development, adopted in 1979, 1/ provides a basis and a useful benchmark for the United Nations system to assess programmes, enhance coordination and policy development at both the intergovernmental and the inter-agency level. At the same time, Agenda 21, adopted in 1992, 2/ provides a new opportunity and an instrument to revitalize and coordinate the programmes and activities of the United Nations system in the field of science and technology. The system of task managers established by the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) provides a particularly promising mechanism for bringing organizations of the United Nations system together in order to strengthen ongoing activities, develop new initiatives and coordinate specific science and technology programmes in the context of implementing the mandates of Agenda 21.

3. Science and technology should expand society's pool of knowledge and stimulate further learning and development. Multilateral cooperation through the United Nations system in support of building capacity, in particular that of developing countries as well as of economies in transition, for the acquisition, absorption, dissemination and application of science and technology should be strengthened. Government-assisted science and technology programmes should take into account the market and the needs of the productive sector. They should be competitive in the broad sense of being economically viable, and contribute effectively to an enhanced standard of living and quality of life for all.

4. The United Nations system should play a more substantive role in assisting, in particular, developing countries as well as economies in transition to develop scientific and technological capacity at the national level in the context of implementing Agenda 21 and other international commitments, conventions and agreements, and create an effective and essential linkage of their implementation with the agenda for development. This agenda should encompass recommendations on appropriate programmes and activities of the United Nations system in science and technology. Endogenous capacity-building should be at the heart of United Nations programmes and activities for science and technology. United Nations efforts should be directed towards building the capacity of countries to develop, assess, encourage and utilize science and technology for development. The United Nations system should encourage an active partnership with Governments, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and the scientific and research community.

5. The level of funding for science and technology as a generic field is limited, being only a small percentage of total United Nations system resources for development. While it was recognized that greatly increased resources would be required if the commitments undertaken in Agenda 21 and in other international instruments relating to science and technology were to be realized, it was noted that enhanced coordination and streamlining could help focus activities for greater impact. It could also help in the efforts to mobilize and channel new and additional resources through the United Nations system.

6. The development of national science and technology policies and infrastructure calls for a broad-based and interdisciplinary approach. It was recognized that scientific and technological activities were deeply embedded in such sectoral classifications as natural resources, agriculture, forestry, industry, transport, communications, health, education, employment, among others. Promotion of science and technology, therefore, required sector-specific interventions as well. The organizations of the United Nations system should coordinate their activities so as to achieve greater complementarity between these sectoral and intersectoral needs. The respective roles of the various entities dealing with science and technology should be further clarified.

7. At the intergovernmental level, the role of the Economic and Social Council should be strengthened as a forum for coordination among all United Nations policy-making bodies concerned with science and technology for development. The Council should more systematically review and compare, on a periodic basis, the policies adopted and actions advocated by all relevant

policy-making bodies of the United Nations organizations in the field of science and technology, giving special attention to the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and the Commission on Sustainable Development and their interactions with the regional commissions.

8. The work programmes and schedules of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, the Commission on Sustainable Development and other relevant intergovernmental bodies should be better harmonized in order to avoid duplication and enhance complementarities and thus increase their effectiveness. In designing its future work programme, the Commission on Science and Technology for Development should, inter alia, take into account the ongoing work of the Commission on Sustainable Development and, as appropriate, the outcome of the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Interrelationship between Investment and Technology Transfer of the Trade and Development Board of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

9. Closer linkages between the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and the Trade and Development Board should be discussed in more depth, taking into account the need for links with the Commission on Sustainable Development and other relevant United Nations institutions. The role of the UNCTAD secretariat in providing substantive support to the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and its comparative advantage within the United Nations system should be recognized. In this respect, the importance of the resources that the General Assembly, in its resolution 48/228, allocated to UNCTAD to carry out its new responsibilities in the field of science and technology was emphasized.

10. Member States should make a more concerted effort to ensure, through their participation in the governing bodies within the system, that they provide clear, consistent and continuous support for coordinated, focused and coherent policies throughout the system.

11. Measures of coordination at the inter-agency level could include:

(a) Greater participation of organizations and agencies in the work of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, including the preparatory and follow-up processes;

(b) Formulation of common approaches and identification of areas of concentration in the activities of United Nations organizations;

(c) Coordination of the medium-term plans, programme budgets and budget cycles of concerned organizations and agencies and the incorporation therein, as appropriate and where possible, of identified inter-agency initiatives;

(d) Strengthening of existing joint units and secondment and exchange of staff between different agencies;

(e) Designation of focal points for science and technology in the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system for sharing information and for ensuring that necessary science and technology issues are reflected in

the discussions of the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development and the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions of ACC.

12. A computer-based field-user-oriented, communications network and regular means of communication could be designed and implemented, on the basis of existing networks and capacities and without duplication (for instance through tele-conferencing, E-mail or telenetworks via satellites) within the United Nations system to link units and projects oriented towards science and technology issues, including those of governmental and non-governmental organizations. These networks should be developed in conjunction with other information networks being developed such as the Sustainable Development Network (SDN) of the United Nations Development Programme and Earthwatch.

13. Stronger interaction and linkages are needed between the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, the specialized agencies and the regional commissions, as well as their subsidiary bodies dealing with science and technology, including the regional technology centres. The linkages between policy analysis and research institutions should be strengthened. The role of the highly specialized and high technology centres of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations University, among others, in particular their contribution to United Nations policy-making bodies, should also be further explored.

14. At the country level, within the framework of national development strategies, coordination can be most effective through the resident coordinator system and through such instruments as the programme approach and national execution.

15. Policy studies are an important element of inter-agency cooperation at the country level. At the request of recipient Governments and in the light of their well-defined national needs and priorities, joint inter-agency and interdisciplinary teams should carry out such comprehensive policy studies.

16. Technology assessment, forecasting and monitoring capabilities constitute an important part of endogenous capacity-building. The primary aim of inter-agency cooperation in this field should be to create or to strengthen national capacities.

17. Existing resources of different United Nations organizations concerned with science and technology should be pooled to carry out activities in areas of common interest. Such pooled resources could be used to finance joint research and operational activities, on the basis of joint project formulation and preparation. Projects at the national level could also be implemented by more than one agency on a cost-sharing basis.

18. Relevant United Nations organizations, funds and programmes should work to sensitize the international community regarding the critical and catalytic role of science and technology for development.

19. United Nations organizations, funds and programmes should strengthen their capabilities to contribute towards strengthening capacities in developing

countries to generate applied research and development activities and results, and the percolation of these results to the industry and the actual user, including through pilot-scale projects.

20. United Nations organizations, funds and programmes need to facilitate and finance, including through catalysing other forms of financial support, South-South technology transfer and cooperation as an effective ingredient of self-sustaining development. In this context, possibilities of cooperation between developing countries and economies in transition should also be explored.

21. United Nations organizations, funds and programmes should work in a coordinated manner to develop a catalogue of proved technologies to enable effective technology choice by developing countries of state-of-the-art technologies.

22. ACC should further review, and endeavour to simplify, administrative and financial procedures among agencies to reduce the complexity of inter-agency cooperative agreements.

23. The Secretary-General is requested to submit a report on the implementation of the present agreed conclusions to the Council at its substantive session of 1995.

Notes

1/ Report of the United Nations Conference on Science and Technology for Development, Vienna, 20-31 August 1979 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.79.I.21 and corrigenda), chap. VII.

2/ Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992, vol. I, Resolutions Adopted by the Conference (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8), resolution 1, annex II.